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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Japan: Changing Opposition Views on Security Issues

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Summary

Radical differences over defense policy have been traditional between Japan's ruling and opposition parties. In the past several years, however, members of the opposition have begun to move closer to Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) positions on security-related issues. These policy changes have accompanied a shift in the attitudes of the Japanese electorate. Most opposition elements have moved toward general endorsement of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty and support of the Self-Defense Forces, but they will continue to challenge the ruling party on specific defense issues in the Diet and will try to use popular themes such as disarmament to win voter support.

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US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty

Increasing acceptance of the Security Treaty is the clearest indicator that opposition positions on security issues are evolving. The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), the rightwing member of the opposition, was the pioneer in this area. In 1976 the party formally endorsed the Security Treaty, although support

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had been building for several years. Komeito followed suit in 1980. In an effort to deflect criticism that it is contributing to a defense buildup, however, Komeito continues to advocate eventual abrogation of the treaty. Komeito's lukewarm acceptance of the Security Treaty reflects continued uncertainty over a new focus for the party platform. []

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Pressure from its powerful leftwing faction has prevented the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) from moderating its views on defense as much as the DSP and Komeito, but the party has softened its once hardline position against the Security Treaty. In 1979 the JSP abandoned its call for immediate abrogation of the Treaty, advocating instead a gradual phase-out followed by signing of a US-Japan friendship treaty. The vocal leftists will resist further shifts toward the center, however, and as a strong supporter of Japan's Three Non-Nuclear Principles¹ and a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific, the JSP will continue opposition to port calls of US nuclear-powered ships. []

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The Japan Communist Party (JCP) has moved little if any on defense issues and is now isolated from the other opposition parties. The JCP remains committed to abrogation of the Security Treaty, although in 1982, in a conciliatory gesture, the Communists called for a mutual nonaggression pact between the United States and Japan. []

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Self-Defense Forces

The Democratic Socialists are longtime supporters of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, but until the mid-1970s favored only qualitative improvements in the forces. After the US withdrawal from Southeast Asia, the DSP's policy began to evolve into one that now advocates an intensified defense buildup. The party was the first to support publicly an increase in defense expenditures exceeding 1 percent of GNP, and the DSP has called for Self-Defense Force participation in UN peacekeeping missions. Komeito acknowledged the need for the Self-Defense Forces in 1980, but on this issue again stopped short of a firm position on defense. The party continues to oppose armament buildups and increases in defense spending over Japan's informal limit. []

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The JSP has developed a split personality on the issue of the Self-Defense Forces. At a party convention in early 1984, for instance, the Socialists for the first time recognized the legality of the forces but at the same time called them unconstitutional. A recent decision not to oppose, but not to

¹ Japan holds fast to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of "not possessing, not manufacturing, and not introducing nuclear weapons into the country." []

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Shifts in Opposition Party Positions
on Specific Security Issues

	<u>MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY</u>	<u>SELF-DEFENSE FORCES</u>
<u>Japan Socialist Party</u>	Repeatedly called for <u>immediate</u> abrogation of MST.	Traditionally called for abolition of SDF.
**Policy Shift:	<p>1978 - Proposed abrogation of MST in favor of a US-Japan Friendship Treaty.</p> <p>1979 - Called for <u>eventual</u> abrogation of MST to be replaced with a US-Japan Friendship Treaty.</p>	<p>1978 - Advocated <u>eventual</u> disbandment of SDF.</p> <p>1984 - Declared SDF legal but unconstitutional.</p> <p>1985 - Convention platform did <u>not</u> include usual <u>statement</u> calling for an unarmed and neutral Japan.</p>
<u>Komeito</u>	Traditionally advocated abrogation of MST.	Developed policy that supported a National Guard Corps to protect Japanese territory.
**Policy Shift:	1980 - Approved of MST, with abrogation as a long-term goal.	1980 - Approved of SDF but will continue to question the government on specific defense programs.
<u>Democratic Socialist Party</u>	Established defense policy included informal endorsement of MST.	Traditionally supported SDF use <u>only</u> for defense purposes.
**Policy Shift:	1976 - Formally endorsed MST.	1980 - Advocated SDF expand role from "defense only"--should be used in UN peacekeeping missions.
<u>Japan Communist Party</u>	Traditional policy calls for abrogation of MST.	Longstanding position has been to oppose SDF.
**Policy Shift:	None	1976 - Continued to call for phase-out of SDF, but proposed establishment of "defensive military force."

support, legislation granting pay increases to Self-Defense Forces personnel again illustrates the Socialists' inability to reach an internal consensus on defense issues. In addition, although the party has accepted the Self-Defense Forces, its platform continues to advocate their eventual disbanding and adamantly opposes increases in Japan's defense budget needed to improve their capabilities. The JCP opposes the Self-Defense Forces because of their ties to the United States but does advocate a "socialist military force" independent of foreign connections. []

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Changes in the Political Environment

With their party membership and electoral support on a downward trend, opposition leaders have viewed tactical coalitions as a way to increase Diet strength. In the past, coming to terms on policy issues such as security has been an obstacle to unity, and party leaders may believe modifying defense platforms could ensure smoother cooperation. Opposition leaders are also vying for the opportunity to enter into an alliance with the LDP, as the New Liberal Club did in 1983 after the ruling party's setback at the polls. The centrists in particular probably see reaching common ground with the LDP on defense as a precondition to any future role in the government. They may consider now to be a good time to increase their attractiveness as coalition partners, believing the stroke LDP kingmaker and former Prime Minister Tanaka suffered on 27 February could lead to a period of instability when LDP politicians might look outside the party for support. []

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Revisions in opposition party positions on security issues are also an attempt to keep pace with changes in Japanese voters' views on defense. Public opinion polls indicate that acceptance of the Mutual Security Treaty (MST) and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) has increased significantly over the past decade. (see Figure 1) Boosts in defense spending do not enjoy the same popular approval, however, which is reflected in opposition party views on this issue. (see Figure 2) []

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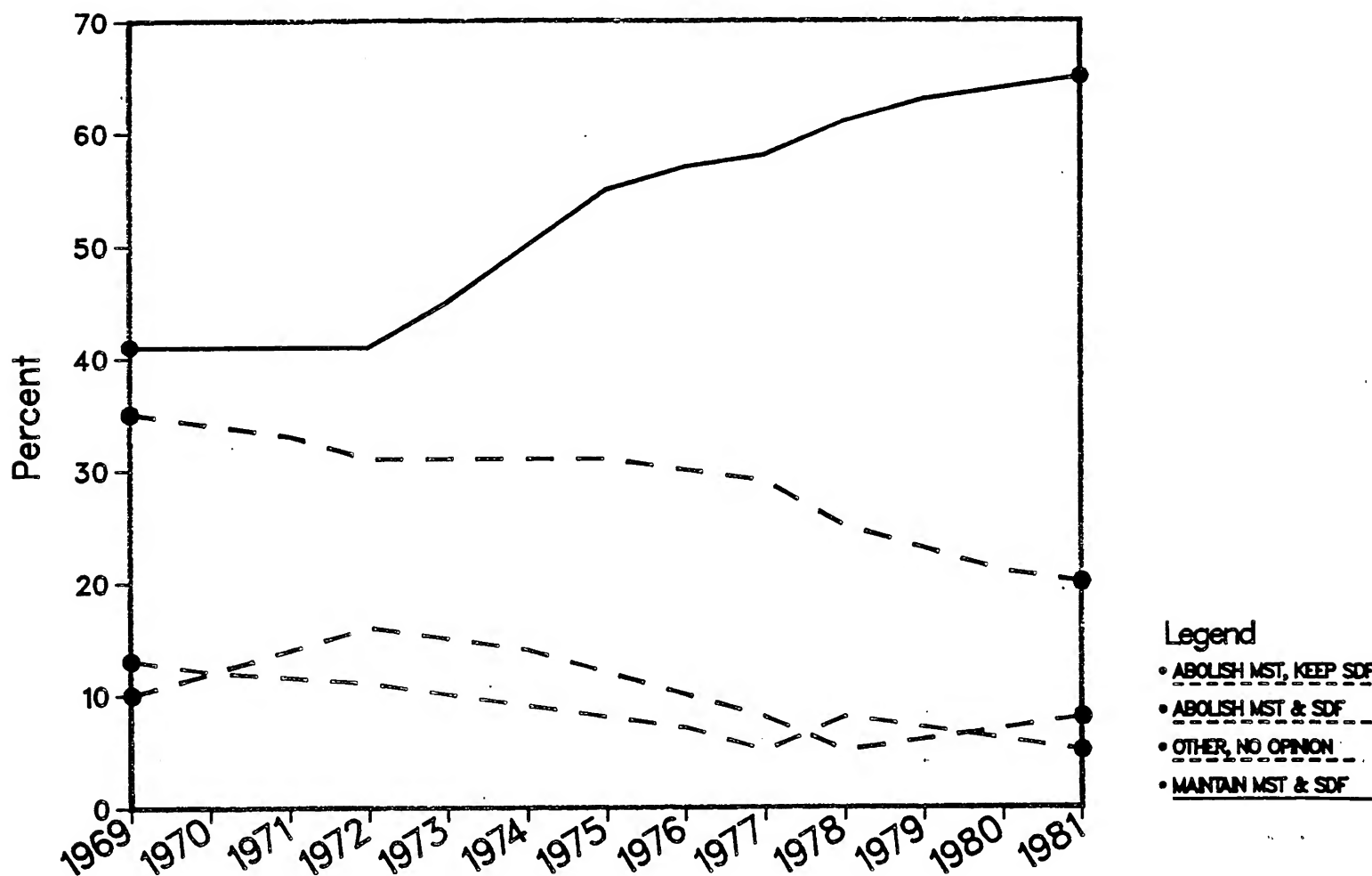
Prospects

Shifts that bring the opposition closer in line with the LDP could reduce criticism of the ruling party's efforts to improve Japan's defense capabilities in cooperation with the United States. The opposition will not completely abandon defense as a weapon to use against the ruling party, however. Focusing on controversial issues in the public spotlight is a key opposition strategy, and defense-related subjects often fit the bill. For example, plans to use the Ikego ammunition depot for US military housing and Miyakejima Island for night landings are provoking highly charged protests from local residents, and the JSP and JCP at the least will probably raise these concerns in the Diet. []

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Best Military Means for Japan's Defense PMIO* Polls 1969 - 1981



*Prime Minister's Information Office

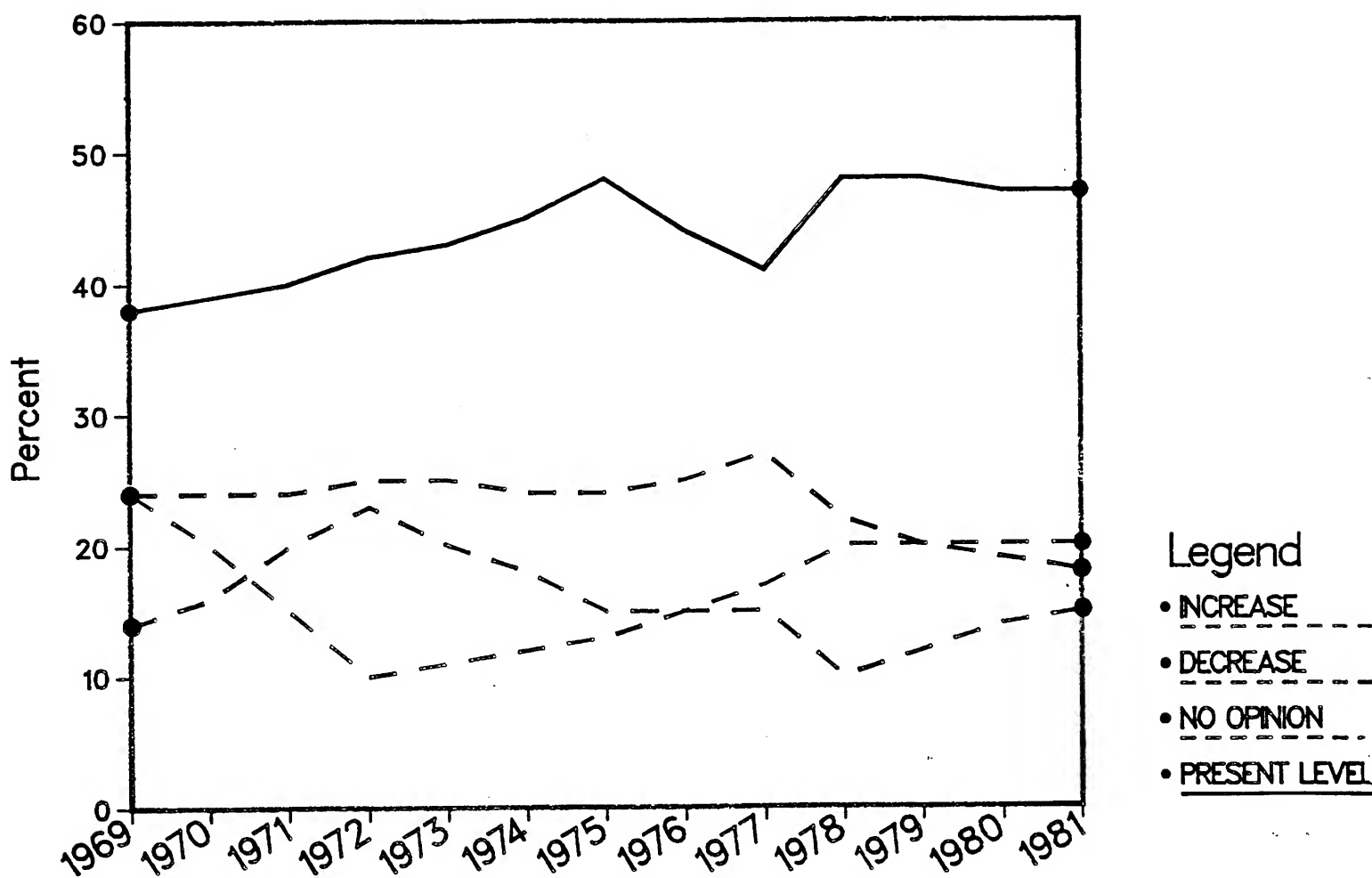
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Figure 2

Attitudes Toward Defense Budget

PMIO* Polls 1969 – 1981



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Furthermore, the opposition parties are reluctant to give up their distinct identities--which to some extent have been forged on defense issues. As a result, they may become increasingly vocal on new security issues or on topics that in the past sometimes received less attention. The JSP and JCP, for instance, have competed for leadership of antinuclear campaigns. In an attempt to take the lead in the arms control arena, a delegation consisting of members of the three centrist parties met with Soviet officials in Moscow late last year to urge them to resume arms talks with the United States. Nakasone's recent discussions with President Reagan on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) have become a new opposition target. Repeated questioning by the opposition parties on Japan's role in SDI has stalled budget debates and will remain a controversial issue. [REDACTED]

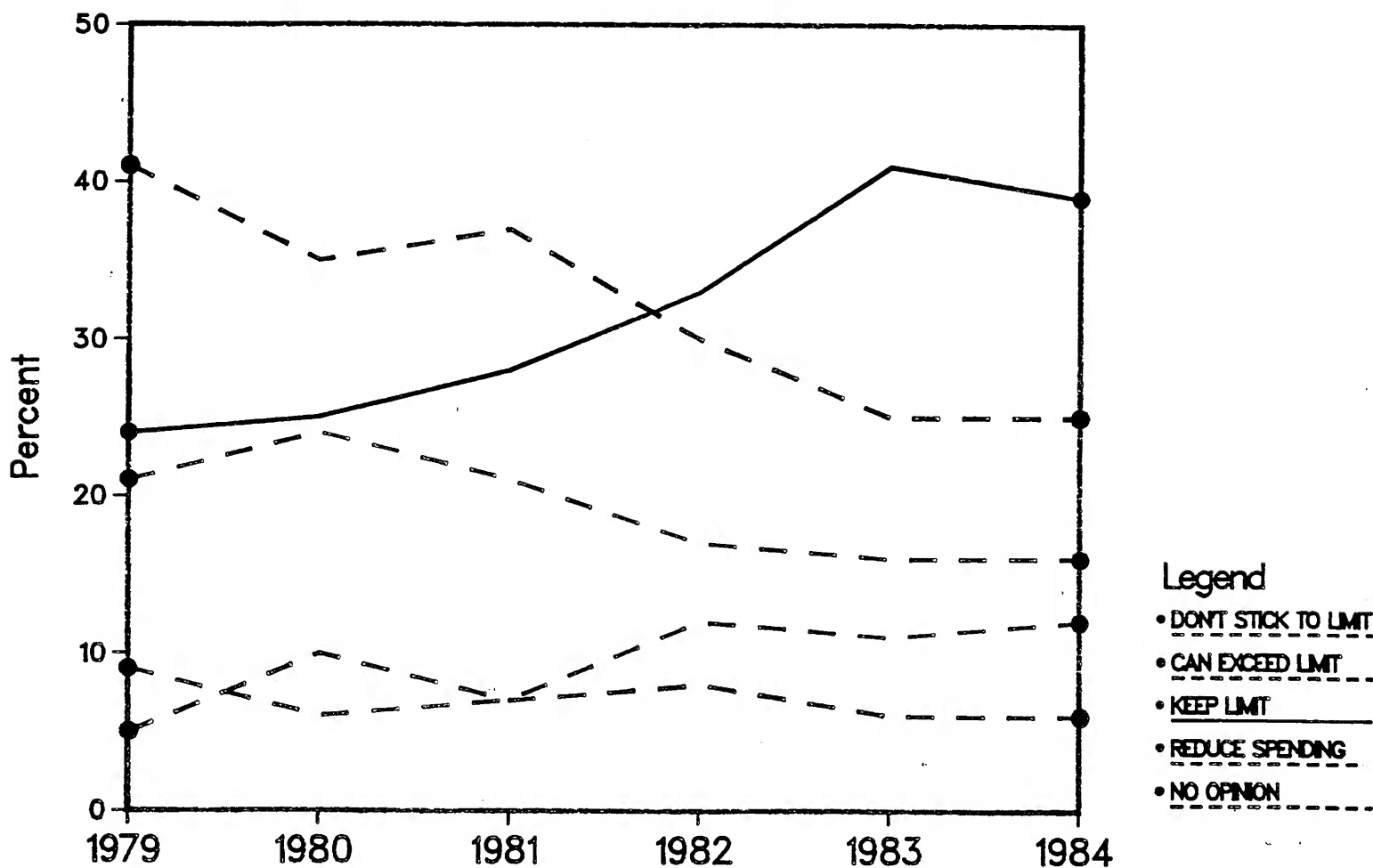
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Opposition party policies on defense spending will continue to be mixed. The DSP favors an increase in spending above the informal limit of 1 percent of GNP, but support for increased spending is unlikely in the near term from the JSP and Komeito. In recent Diet deliberations, both demanded a government pledge to adhere to the present limit. The two parties also disrupted Budget Committee hearings over the issue, although they agreed to resume deliberations with only a promise that the LDP would "make every effort" to abide by the limit. The two parties are champions of social programs that serve the specific needs of their constituencies. As a result, they will continue to resist increases in defense spending while social services are facing severe cuts in austere national budgets. In addition, with general popular opinion also favoring the current spending limit, the JSP and Komeito will not feel pressed to change their position. (see Figure 3) [REDACTED]

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Figure 3
One Percent of GNP Defense Budget Ceiling
Jiji Polls 1979 - 1984



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